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Press Service, U.S.D.A.

ASK FOR THE QUALITY GRADE WHEN YOU BUY CANNED GOODS

When you pick up a can of corn in the grocery store and look at the label, decorated with a picture of an ear of corn and some fancy name like "Golden Glow," "Smith's Bantam," or "Best Country Gentleman," what do you really learn about the contents? How can you tell, in choosing among several brands, which one is worth the most, or is most suitable for your purpose?

Price alone is not an indication, for one store may price the same brands differently from another. The fancy name tells you nothing. In fact, the contents of cans of apparently different brands, sold at varying prices, may look and taste about the same when you open them up. It is said that there are about 4,500 brands of canned corn, 1,000 brands of canned peaches, 300 brands of canned pineapple, and 1,000 brands of canned salmon. Many wholesale distributors buy and sell according to fancy brand names which mean certain quality grades to them, but which mean nothing to the housewife. How can she expect to judge canned foods by brands or price?

Your Government has some help for you if you are interested in procuring the best value for every penny you outlay for food. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture has already established definite quality standards for several kinds of canned foods, particularly corn, peas, tomatoes, snap beans, and lima beans, and is working on others. The bureau urges canners and distributors to print these quality grades on the labels so the housewife can tell at a glance what grade she is getting. It urges the housewife to ask for these grades until they are in common use.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics believes that it would be much simpler and fairer to everybody concerned—grower, canner, wholesaler, retailer, and house—wife—if "Grade A" or "Fancy," "Grade B" or "Choice," "Grade C" or "standard," and

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"Substandard" (now required by law) were plainly printed on labels according to the contents of the can. Under the Food and Drugs Act, labels on all food products must be truthful. So it is sufficient for the canner or distributor to learn for himself what grades he has to offer and to guarantee these grades on the labels. If the cans enter into interstate commerce, and the statements are not truthful, the foods may be seized and the canner prosecuted by the Government. There is also a special new official grading service which is available to those who wish to pay for it. If an inspector appointed by the Government has personally supervised every stage of preparing and canning the food, including the sanitation of the plant, the distributor or canner may mark his goods "U. S. Grade A," and so on. But the "U.S." may not appear on the label unless this service has actually been performed.

How does knowing the grade affect your selection in buying canned foods?

Like every careful housewife, you doubtless have different uses for different qualities. Take canned corn as an example. For a company dinner, you are willing to pay a trifle extra, and get "Grade A." Then you give the family plain stewed corn, you want it good in flavor, but not high in cost. "Grade B" or "Choice" would be very nice, and "Grade C" would do if you are watching pennies pretty closely.

"Grade C" or a "substandard" grade (which merely means, a wholesome food lacking some of the qualities of the higher grades) would give adequate flavor to such dishes as corn pudding, corn soup, corn fritters, tomatoes with corn and cheese, and so on.

It is easy to see how helpful these grades will be when they are once adopted universally. It is important for the housewife's voice to be heard in the matter, for at present, distributors of canned goods declare that the housewife does not read the labels. When she convinces them that she does, and that she prefers to buy canned goods bearing plainly marked quality grades, she is more likely to get this information on the labels.

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